

Berks and Bucks 3, Hertfordshire 1

DESPITE the weekend withdrawal en bloc of Slough Town's three-man contingent, Berks and Bucks' reshuffled squad still held the whip-hand over Hertfordshire in the opening Southern Counties Amateur Championship clash at the Meadow on Tuesday evening.

It was the second time this season Slough manager Tommy Lawrence had pulled his men out from the county side only days before a game. A similar situation arose for the friendly against an Army XI at Loakes Park earlier in the season.

Slough men originally selected to play were Eire international striker John Connell, England star Joe Adams and full-back Keith Mead. Also dropping out was Wycombe's Barry Baker, who is recovering from a leg injury, and Maidenhead's Mick Chatterton.

Chatterton's absence gave young Marlow prospect Leo Markham the chance to debut for the allied counties, while Wokingham defender Pat Walshe, Aylesbury striker Bobby Harper, and Chesham's Steve Bates also found themselves drafted in at short notice. Peter Stone, Marlow's centre half, stood by as substitute.

Neither side ever completely got to grips with the squelching ground conditions. The lighter players suffered particularly. But clearly the home team's extra sense of adventure was to be the deciding factor.

Indeed despite the impressive strength in depth shown on paper by the visitors, there was nothing to disprove the words of Berks and Bucks team manager Barry Darvill when he said: "With the talent available this year, we ought to be stronger than anybody else".

Facts and figures endorse his thoughts. Even without Connell and Adams, the county side boasted five amateur internationals — three English, one Welsh, one Scottish and all Wycombe Wanderers.

WANDERERS' BRAND

Their goals — from Johnny Hutchinson and Geoff Anthony — all carried the brand of

Fixture switch

THE Berks and Bucks F.A. have switched their Southern Counties Amateur Championship game against Kent on Wednesday, February 3 to Maidenhead instead of Slough.

This follows the withdrawal of three Slough players by the club from the match against Herts at Chesham on Tuesday.

Slough players have not been selected against Kent for the same reason.

Loakes Park, from where seven players had been drawn.

So, with six St. Albans men representing Herts, and Saints' manager Sid Prosser, acting as Darvill's counterpart, an intriguing battle of inter-club prestige provided the background to a cold night's football.

Markham, bearing much of the early responsibility for his side's attacks, opened the trail for their first goal in the 25th minute.

Followed by Anthony, he darted up the right wing, before beating a defender and centring into a goalmouth full of Herts' dark blue and nothing else.

But from nowhere Hutchinson moved up on the blind side, kept the ball when challenged by Turner, and swung it into goal.

EQUALISER

Herts emerged for the second half full of beans, and equalised through Butterfield. In the 50th minute he stood at the far post to transfer a cross after the home defence had let it travel freely along their line.

Herts' fire died down somewhat though, and with the more experienced Harper taking up the role of figurehead to relieve Markham of some of the strain, Berks and Bucks were soon pressing their visitors back again.

After 74 minutes, Turner, whose handling of high crosses often looked suspect, slipped badly when letting Anthony's low shot pass through his clutches as the host F.A. went 2-1 up.

And 13 minutes later Anthony again swivelled the ball home in a scrambled affair just out from the visitors line.

RESPONSE

Herts responded by throwing substitute Murphy into action and pulling off Dave Neville. But the emphasis had always been on the likelihood of two points for Berks and Bucks, and so it was.

Their 3-1 lead rarely looked in danger and revenge for last season's 3-0 hammering ensued. Now Kent stand between them and a place in the quarter finals.

Thence to the final? Could be that depends not so much on whether or not the Berks and Bucks F.A. has the most talented players, but more on whether that talent is made available.

M.W.

BERKS AND BUCKS: J. Maskell; P. Walsh (Wokingham), S. Bates (Chesham), E. Powell, J. Delaney, I. MacLean, G. Anthony, L. Pritchard, L. Markham (Marlow), R. Harper (Aylesbury), J. Hutchinson sub. P. Stone (Marlow, not used). All players Wycombe unless indicated.

HERTFORDSHIRE: D. Turner (Hitchin); R. Grant, M. Howkins (Hitchin), P. Wood, P. Robinson (Hitchin), D. Lawrence (B. Stortford), D. Neville (sub. R. Murphy, 77th min.), R. Childs, J. Draper (Boreham Wood), J. Butterfield, P. Collett. All players St. Albans unless indicated.

Referee: H. G. Smith (Oxon).

Goalscorers: Berks and Bucks — J. Hutchinson (25); G. Anthony 2 (64, 77). Herts — Butterfield (50).